Dark Hollow

By Anna Katharine Green

Illustrations by C. D. Rhodes

CHAPTER XV—Continued.

"Twenty-five miles and over a very rough mountain road. Did I not confidently expect to find Oliver there, I should not let you undertake this ride. But the inquiries I have just made lead me to hope for the best results."

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"What's that?"

"That's the cry of a loon."

"How awful! Do they often cry like that?"

"Not often in the nighttime."

Reuther shuddered.

Mr. Black regarded her anxiously. Had he done wrong to let her join him in this strange ride?

"Shall we go back and wait for broad daylight?" he asked.

"No, no. I could not bear the suspense of wondering whether all was going well and the opportunity being given you of seeing and speaking to him. We have taken such precautions—chosen so late (or should I say so early) a start—that I'm sure we have outwitted the man who is so watchful of us. But if we go back, we cannot slip away from him again; and Oliver will have to submit to a humiliation it is our duty to spare him. And the good judge, too. I don't care if the loons do cry; the night is beautiful."

And it was, had their hearts been in tune to enjoy it. A gibbous moon had risen, and, inefficient as it was to light up the recesses of the forest, it illumined the treetops and brought out the difference between earth and sky. The road, known to the horses, if not to themselves, extended like a black ribbon under their eyes, but the patches of light which fell across it at intervals took from it the uninterrupted gloom it must have otherwise had. Mr. Sloan, who was at once their guide and host, promised that dawn would be upon them before they reached the huge gully which was the one dangerous feature of the road.

Their guide had prophesied truly. Heralded by that long cry of the loon, the dawn began to reveal itself and the everyday world of the mighty forest was upon them with its night mystery gone.

But not the romance of their errand, or the anxiety which both felt as to its fulfillment. Full sight brought full realization. However they might seek to cloak the fact, they could no longer disguise from themselves that the object of their journey might not be acceptable to the man in hiding at Tempest lodge. Reuther's faith in him was strong, but even her courage faltered as she thought of the disgrace awaiting him whatever the circumstances or however he might look upon his father's imperative command to return.

But she did not draw rein, and the three continued to ride up and on. Suddenly, however, Mr. Sloan was seen to turn his head sharply, and in another moment his two companions heard him say:

"We are followed. Ride on and leave me to take a look."

Instinctively they also glanced back before obeying. They were just rounding the top of an abrupt hill, and expected to have an uninterrupted view of the road behind. But the masses of foliage were as yet too thick for them to see much but the autumnal red and yellow spread out below them.

"I hear them; I do not see them," remarked their guide. "Two horses are approaching."

"How far are we now from the lodge?"

"A half-hour's ride. We are just at the opening of the gully."

"You will join us soon?"

"As quickly as I make out who are on the horses behind us."

Reuther and the lawyer rode on. Her cheeks had gained a slight flush, but otherwise she looked unmoved. He was less at ease than she; for he had less to sustain him.

The gully, when they came to it, proved to be a formidable one. It was not only deep but precipitous, and for the two miles they rode along its edge they saw no let-up in the steepness on one side or of the almost equally abrupt rise of towering rock on the other. It was Reuther's first experience of so precipitous a climb, and under other circumstances she might have been timid; but in her present heroic mood, it was all a part of her great adventure, and as such accepted.

The lawyer eyed her with growing admiration. He had not miscalculated her pluck.

As they were making a turn to gain the summit, they heard Mr. Sloan's voice behind them. Drawing in their horses, they greeted him eagerly when he appeared.

"Were you right? Are we followed?"

"That's as may be. I didn't hear or see anything more. I waited, but nothing happened, so I came on."

His words were surly and his looks sour; they, therefore, forbore to question him further, especially as their keenest interest lay ahead, rather than behind them. They were nearing Tempest lodge. As it broke upon their view, perched like an eagle's eyrie on the crest of a rising peak, they drew rein, and, after a short consultation, Mr. Sloan wended his way up alone. He was a well-known man throughout the whole region, and would be likely to gain admittance if anyone could. But all wished the hour had been less early.

However, somebody was up in the picturesque place. A small trail of smoke could be seen hovering above its single chimney, and promptly upon Mr. Sloan's approach, a rear door swung back and an old man showed himself, but with no hospitable intent. On the contrary, he motioned the intruder back, and shouting out some very decided words, resolutely banged the door shut.

Mr. Sloan turned slowly about.

"Bad luck," he commented, upon joining his companions. "That was Deaf Dan. He's got a warm nest here, and he's determined to keep it. 'No visitors wanted,' was what he shouted, and he didn't even hold out his hand when I offered him the letter."

"Give me the letter," said Reuther. "He won't leave a lady standing out in the cold."

Mr. Sloan handed over the judge's message, and helped her down, and she in turn began to approach the place. As she did so, she eyed it with the curiosity of a hungry heart. It was a compact structure of closely cemented stone, built to resist gales and harbor a would-be recluse, even in an Adirondack winter.

Mr. Sloan had been repulsed from the west door; she would try the east. Oliver (if Oliver it were) was probably asleep; but she would knock, and knock, and knock; and if Deaf Dan did not open, his master soon would.

But when she found herself in face of this simple barrier and was lifting her hand to the door it suddenly flew open and a man appeared before her.

CHAPTER XVI.

Found and Lost.

It was Oliver. Oliver unkempt and with signs upon him of a night's work of study or writing; but Oliver!—her lover once, but now just a stranger into whose hand she must put this letter.

She tried to stammer out her errand; but the sudden pallor, the starting eyes—the whole shocked, almost terrified appearance of the man she was facing stopped her. She forgot the surprise, the incredulity of mind with which he would naturally hail her presence at his door in a place so remote and of such inaccessibility. She only saw that his hands had gone up and out at sight of her, and to her sensitive soul, this looked like a rebuff which, while expected, choked back her words and turned her faintly flushing cheek scarlet.

"It is not I," burst from her lips in incoherent disclaimer of his possible thought. "I'm just a messenger. Your father—"

"It is you!" Quickly his hands passed across his eyes. "How—" Then his glance, following hers, fell on the letter which she now remembered to hold out.

"It's the copy of a telegram," she tremblingly explained, as he continued to gaze at it without reaching to take it. "You could not be found in Detroit and as it was important that you should receive this word from your father, I undertook to deliver it. I remembered your fondness for this place and how you once said that this is where you would like to write your books, and so I came on a venture—but not alone—Mr. Black is with me and—"

"Mr Black! Who? What?" He was still staring at his father's letter; and still had made no offer to take it.

"Read this first," said she.

Then he woke to the situation. He took the letter, and drawing her inside, shut the door while he read it. She, trembling very much, did not dare to lift her eyes to watch its effect, but she was conscious that his back and not his face was turned her way, and that the moment was the stillest one of her whole life.

Then there came a rattling noise as he crushed the letter in his hand.

"Tell me what this means," said he, but he did not turn his head as he made this request.

"Your father must do that," was her gentle reply. "I was only to deliver the letter. I came—we came—thus early, because we thought—we feared we should get no opportunity later to find you here alone. There seem to be people on the road—whom—whom you might feel obliged to entertain and as your father cannot wait—"

He had wheeled about. His face confronted hers. It wore a look she did not understand and which made him seem a stranger to her. Involuntarily she took a step back.

"I must be going now," said she, and fell—her physical weakness triumphing at last over her will power.

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"Oliver? Where is Oliver?"

These were Reuther's first words, as, coming to herself, she perceived Mr. Black bending helplessly over her.

The answer was brief, almost indifferent. Alanson Black was cursing himself for allowing her to come to this house alone.

"He was here a moment ago. When he saw you begin to give signs of life, he slid out. How do you feel, my—my dear? What will your mother say?"

"But Oliver?" She was on her feet now; she had been lying on some sort of couch. "He must—Oh, I remember now. Mr. Black, we must go. I have given him his father's letter."

"We are not going till you have something to eat. Not a word. I'll—" Why did his eye wander to the nearest window, and his words trail away into silence?

Reuther turned about to see. Oliver was in front, conversing earnestly with Mr. Sloan. As they looked, he dashed back into the rear of the house, and they heard his voice rise once or twice in some ineffectual commands to his deaf servant, then there came a clatter and a rush from the direction of the stable, and they saw him flash by on a gaunt but fiery horse, and take with long bounds the road up which they had just labored. He had stopped to equip himself in some measure for his ride, but not the horse, which was without saddle or any sort of bridle but a halter strung about his neck.

This was flight; or so it appeared to Mr. Sloan, as he watched the young man disappear over the brow of the hill. What Mr. Black thought was not so apparent. He had no wish to discourage Reuther whose feeling was one of relief as her first word showed.

"Oliver is gone. We shall not have to hurry now and perhaps if I had a few minutes in which to rest—"

She was on the verge of fainting again.

And then Alanson Black showed of what stuff he was made. In ten minutes he had bustled about the half-deserted building, and with the aid of the dazed and uncomprehending deaf mute, managed to prepare a cup of hot tea and a plate of steaming eggs for the weary girl.

After such an effort, Reuther felt obliged to eat, and she did; seeing which, the lawyer left her for a moment and went out to question their guide.

"Where's the young lady?"

This from Mr. Sloan.

"Eating something. Come in and have a bite, and let the horses eat, too. The young fellow went off pretty quick, eh?"

"Ya-as." The drawl was one of doubt. "But quickness don't count

A Small Trail of Smoke Hovering Above Its Single Chimney.

Fast or slow, he's on his way to capture—if that's what you want to know."

"What? We are followed, then?"

"There are men on the road; two, as I told you before. He can't get by them—if that's what he wants to do."

"But I thought they fell back. We didn't hear them after you joined us."

"No; they didn't come on. They didn't have to. This is the only road down the mountain, and it's one you've got to follow or go tumbling over the precipice. All they've got to do is to wait for him; and that's what I tried to tell him, but he just shook his arm at me and rode on. He might better have waited—for company."

Mr. Black cast a glance behind him, saw that the door of the house was almost closed and ventured to put another question.

"What did he ask you when he came out here?"

"Why we had chosen such an early hour to bring him his father's message," Sloan replied.

"And what did you say?"

"Wa'al, I said that there was another fellow down my way awful eager to see him, too; and that you were mortal anxious to get to him first. That was about it, wasn't it, sir?"

"Yes. And how did he take that?"

"He turned white, and asked me just what I meant. Then I said that some one wanted him pretty bad, for, early as it was, this stranger was up as soon as you, and had followed us into the mountains and might show up any time on the road. At which he gave me a stare, then plunged back into the house to get his hat and trot out his horse. I never saw quicker work. But it's no use; he can't escape those men. They know it, or they wouldn't have stopped where they did, waiting for him."

Mr. Black recalled the aspect of the gully, and decided that Mr. Sloan was right. There could be but one end to this adventure. Oliver would be caught in a manifest effort to escape, and the judge's cup of sorrow and humiliation would be full. He felt the shame of it himself, also the folly of his own methods and of the part he had allowed Reuther to play. Beckoning to his host to follow him, he turned toward the house.

"Don't mention your fears to the young lady," said he. "At least, not till we are well past the gully."

"I shan't mention anything. Don't you be afeared of that."

And with a simultaneous effort difficult for both, they assumed a more cheerful air, and briskly entered the house.

It was not until they were well upon the road back that Reuther ventured to speak of Oliver. She was riding as far from the edge of the precipice as possible. In descent it looked very formidable to her unaccustomed eye.

"This is a dangerous road for a man to ride bareback," she remarked. "I'm terrified when I think of it, Mr. Black. Why did he go off quite so suddenly? Is there a train he is anxious to reach? Mr. Sloan, is there a train?"

"Yes, miss, there is a train."

"Which he can get by riding fast?"

"I've known it done!"

"Then he is excusable." Yet her anxious glance stole ever and again to the dizzy verge toward which she now unconsciously urged her own horse till Mr. Black drew her aside.

A half-hour's further descent, then a quick turn and Mr. Sloan, who had ridden on before them, came galloping hastily back.

Mr. Black hastened to meet their guide. "What now?" he asked. "Have they come together? Have the detectives got him?"

"No, not him; only his horse. The animal has just trotted up—riderless."

"Good God! The child's instinct was true. He has been thrown—"

"No." Mr. Sloan's mouth was close to the lawyer's ear. "There's another explanation. If the fellow is game and anxious enough to reach the train to risk his neck for it, there's a path he could have taken which would get him there without his coming round this turn." Then as Reuther came ambling up: "Young lady, don't let me scare you, but it looks now as if the young man had taken a short cut to the station. Look back along the edge of the precipice for about half a mile, and you will see shooting up from the gully a solitary tree whose topmost branch reaches within a few feet of the road above."

"Yes," she suddenly replied, as her glance fell on the one red splash showing against the dull gray of the cliff.

"A leap from the road, if well timed, would land a man among some very stalwart branches."

"But—but—if he didn't reach—didn't catch—"

"Young lady, he's a man in a thousand. If you want the proof, look over there."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

It Was a Mouse.

If there's anything that will make a woman throw good resolutions to the wind quicker than she made them, it is a mouse. A young woman arrived at one of the New York hotels and before retiring at night she decided to straighten up the things in the closet of her room. She was singing over her work and was doing nicely until she discovered two shining little beads in one corner and decided there must be a lost hatpin there. So she reached out to take it. What her hand met was soft and covered with hair. It was a mouse. The yell that emanated from that room convinced everybody tangoing several floors above that cruel murder was afoot, and there was a scramble to the hallways. The young woman finally succeeded in opening the door of her room and informed the gathering crowd what a narrow escape she had from annihilation. Now there is a standing reward of $5 for the head of that mouse—detached from the rest of the mouse. If it ever appears again, there's no telling what may happen.

Dust Clouds Armies Make.

An army on the march along dry roads naturally throws up very heavy dust clouds. To those who haven't been trained one dust cloud looks very much like another, but to a soldier these dust clouds tell a very clear story.

The dust clouds thrown up by infantry, for example, hangs in a low, thick cloud. The longer the cloud the more men underneath it, and a scout can, by this means, make a fairly accurate guess of the number of men on the march.

Cavalry on the march sends up a dust cloud that is much higher and thinner than that of infantry. The most distinctive of these dust clouds, however, is that made by wagons and heavy guns. The dust rises in little groups of clouds, quite different from the long clouds of cavalry and infantry.

So even when unable to see the actual cause of the dust, a scout can tell many miles away what kind of force is passing along a road.

Rice Crop of United States.

The acreage of rice in Louisiana and Arkansas has increased approximately 700,000 acres in the last two years. The United States is now growing practically the equivalent of all the rice it uses.

Dancing Around.

Nowadays, when two irresistible bodies meet, the usual course is for them to join hands and take a few turns in the maxixe or the bostiaton.—Judge.

TEMPERANCE NOTES

(Conducted by the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union.)

NO MODEL LICENSE LAW.

Major Dan Morgan Smith was for four years general counsel for the liquor organization known as the Model License league. The following paragraphs from an address of his shows why he threw up that position and is now speaking and working for prohibition.

"For four years I advocated the passage of a model license law as a means of lessening the evils of drink. As the head of the law department of one of the three largest liquor associations in America, I maintained that its passage would take the liquor dealers out of politics and the lawbreakers out of the liquor business.

"Was I wrong? I shall never know, for the liquor crowd were paying me to talk reform and paying others to defeat reform!

"The model license law was effective as a vote-getter, but it never cleaned out one dive, never effected one reform, for, although advocated in every fight against prohibition in the last six years, it has never been enacted in any place. Its advocacy has fooled more decent people into voting with the liquor crowd than all the specious nonsense about taxes and personal liberty put together. Can we expect laws from the liquor camp that will eliminate the dive, or lessen drunkenness or stop the sale of liquor to minors? Can we expect brewery agents to pass laws that will take away the license of brewery-owned saloons? Can we expect legislators, nominated and elected by the brewery interests, to pass laws that will take the liquor business out of politics? No, the only thing we can expect from the liquor people is just what we have received in the past—lying promises."

PLEA FOR THE CHILD.

(From Address by FATHER PATRICK MURPHY of Texas.)

I contend tonight that there are helpless children whose little bodies are crying out for nourishment—the food they need—and yet the mother cannot cook it for them because that bunch got all the money first. The little child is crying. I'll tell you, and I am sure any doctors in the audience will bear me out, when a child in the poorer homes is not properly nourished, its pain is not in the stomach alone; there is not a blood cell in its little body that is not suffering.

I maintain that you men who are going to vote wet, should think of this. There is not a blood cell in the child's body that is not crying out to your God against you.

In your city there are little wasted hands raised up in pleading. You will find them in the homes of your drunkards. You will see the faces of the little ones, thin, emaciated and telling pathetically of their hungry bodies. These little children are praying that you will decide a great question regardless of what you seem to lose by it.

HERE TO STAY.

The following is quoted from a letter written by Senator Moses E. Clapp of Minnesota to George W. Perkins, chairman of the Progressive national committee: "The prohibition movement today differs from that movement in other times. When you and I were boys, every spring there was seen a temperance agitation and everybody took the pledge. Some kept it and some did not. The present movement is entirely different. There is no hysteria or excitement about it. It is simply a calm, deliberate judgment on the part of the American people, from the man who employs to the man who is employed, that the saloon is a menace. Having come in this quiet way, free from hysteria and excitement, and as a result of deliberate judgment, I am inclined to think it is here to stay, and if times are good, is liable to be more of a factor than we sometimes suppose."

IN RUSSIA.

From July to December there were recorded in Petrograd in 1913 ninety-seven suicides, but in 1914 only fourteen. The same phenomenon was observed in Warsaw, where during the first half of 1914 there were recorded 419 suicides, and during the second half only 205. The reduction of the number of small loans made by the pawnshops, and the increase of the deposits in the savings banks, were among the further gratifying results of temperance. For the first two months of 1915 the savings banks of Petrograd received deposits exceeding the figures for the corresponding months of 1914 by one and a half million rubles (£150,000), while throughout Russia the quantity of deposits increased by a hundred billion rubles (£10,000,000).

HOW TO IMPROVE SALOONS.

A liquor paper wants to know how to improve the saloon. We make the following suggestions, and guarantee that if followed they will improve any saloon in America:

Take down the sign.

Move out the bars and fixtures.

Empty the stock in trade down the sewer.

Get the bartenders some other work.

Pull down the curtains.

Lock the doors.

Put a "To Rent" sign on the out side.—Exchange.

WOULD NEED 294 SUBMARINES

Germans Would Require That Number to Effectually Blockade All British Ports.

Assuming that the German submarines are based at Zeebrugge, the time required for the passage to and from blockading stations off the ports of Great Britain would be about four days. The average time necessary for overhauling at the base between trips may be estimated at six days, and the time which may be spent at sea between visits to the base cannot well exceed twenty days. Consequently it would be impracticable to maintain more than about half of the total force of submarines on blockading stations.

There are forty-nine ports on the coasts of England, Scotland and Wales which it would be necessary for the German submarines to blockade if all supplies are to be cut off.

An effective blockade of any port could scarcely be maintained in the face of defensive operations, which must be expected, with less than three submarines, and double that number would be none too many. If the minimum number of three boats be allowed for each port, the Germans would require at least 147 constantly on station to close all the ports of Great Britain; that is, allowing for the necessary passage time to and from the base and the essential overhauling period, the total force should be 294 submarines.—World's Work.

Too Much Trouble.

In Sunday school one afternoon the superintendent announced the hymn, "I Want to Be an Angel," and when the others began to sing, it was noticed that little Jessie was conspicuously silent.

"What is the matter, my dear?" kindly asked the teacher. "Why don't you sing, 'I Want to Be an Angel?'"

"Because, Miss Mary," was the rather startling rejoinder of the child, "I don't want to be one."

"Don't want to be one!" exclaimed the horrified teacher. "Why do you say that?"

"Because," calmly answered Jessie, "they have to play on the harp and I have had trouble enough taking my piano lessons."

Faith and Good Works.

One Sunday morning a woman who lived in a country district was nearly an hour late to church. Since she was always very punctual, the parson greatly wondered and questioned her at the close of the service.

"The horse that we were driving," answered the woman, "acted as if it was going to run away, so I got out of the wagon and walked all the way to town."

"You shouldn't have been frightened, sister," impressively returned the parson. "You should have put your trust in Heaven."

"I did until the harness broke," was the quick rejoinder of the woman, "and then I jumped."

The Shell Shortage.

A. J. Dwiel, praising the English volunteer army, said in New York the other day:

"Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates fight side by side with coal miners. Peers' sons and millionaires' sons hobnob with plumbers and blacksmiths in the ranks.

"There are lots of 'nuts' (dudes) in the volunteer army—and the kaiser finds them pretty hard to crack, too—notwithstanding their lack of shells."

Of Course.

"Suppose all the energy that is wasted in dancing were devoted to some useful purpose."

"I never entertain a supposition like that."

"Why not?"

"Because experience and observation have taught me that the energy devoted to dancing is foot power and not brain power."